

Saturday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 6:30-34): The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat”

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Today, the Gospel proposes a situation, a need and a paradox; all, very real in our time, too.

The situation: The Apostles are “overworked”: “People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat” (Mk 6:31). Quite often we are facing the same kind of stress. Our work consumes a good share of our energy; the family, where each member seeks our love; the other activities, which we are engaged in, which do good to us while benefiting third parties... If you wish... you can? Maybe it would be sounder admitting we cannot do all we would like to...

The need: Our body, our head and our heart have a need: to rest. In these few verses we have an often ignored manual about resting, where communication is emphasized. The Apostles “gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had

done and taught” (Mk 6:30). Communication with God, following the thread of what is more cherished to our heart. And —o surprise!— we find God is already awaiting. And He hopes to find us with our tiredness.

Jesus tells them: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” (Mk 6:31). In God's plans there is a place of rest! But there is more, as our whole existence, with all that entails, must rest in God. An anxious Saint Augustine claims: “You made us for you and our heart is restless while not resting with You.” God's rest is creative; not “anesthetic”: bumping into God's love makes us focus on our heart and our thoughts.

A paradox: The Gospel scene has a “bad” ending for the disciples who cannot rest. Jesus's plan fails since people were coming. They have not been able to break away. We often cannot get rid of our obligations (children, wife, work...): it would be a betrayal to ourselves! And yet, we must find God in these realities. If there is communication with God, if our heart rests in Him, we shall play down our useless tensions... and reality —free of chimeras— will show God's sign more clearly. In Him, that's where we should rest!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “There is no rest which is not a weariness, unless it be suffered with God, or for God.” (Saint Teresa of Ávila)
- “The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It casts upon it a ‘contemplative’ gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved.” (Saint John Paul II)
- “God's action is the model for human action. If God ‘rested and was refreshed’ on the seventh day, man too ought to ‘rest’ and should let others, especially the poor, ‘be refreshed.’ (Ex 23:12). The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 2172)